

HEALING

M. R. NEWBOLT

265.8

N 428

Class 265.8

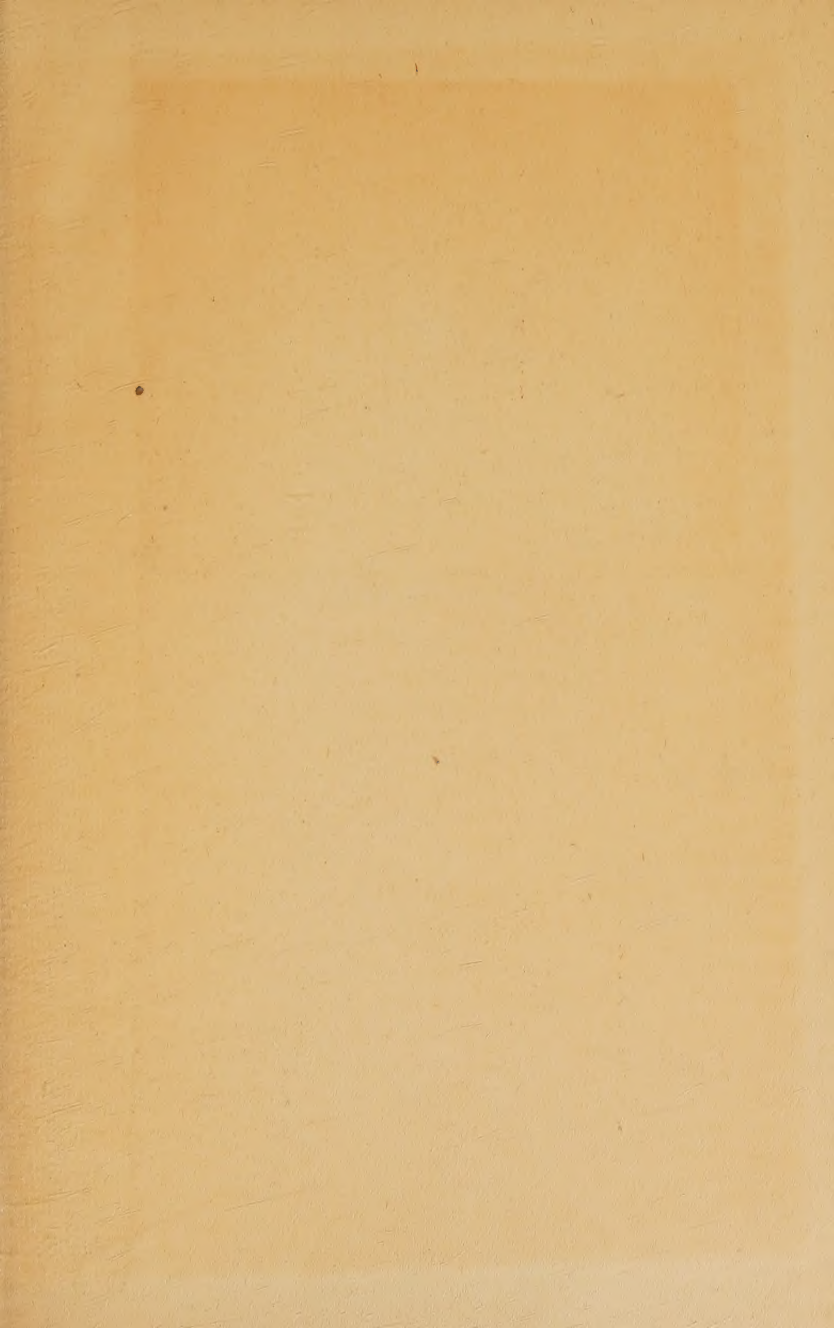
Book N428

General Theological Seminary Library

Chelsea Square, New York

PRESENTED BY

Soc'y for Promoting Religion and Learning

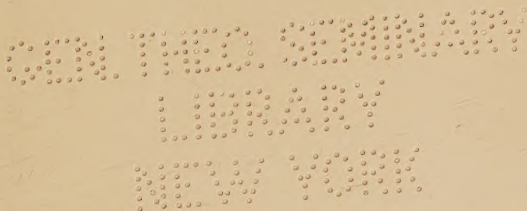


HEALING

HEALING

BY THE REV.

M. R. NEWBOLT



LONDON

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK AND TORONTO : THE MACMILLAN CO.

1924

265.8

N/428

75748

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
MAY 1964

DEDICATED WITH GRATITUDE TO
R. S.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. FACTS AND THEORIES OF PSYCHIC HEAL- ING - - -	7
II. THE RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF PSYCHIC HEALING - - -	21
III. HOLY UNCTION - - -	38
IV. PSYCHIC HEALING AND MEDICINE -	58
APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I. - - -	74

HEALING

CHAPTER I

FACTS AND THEORIES OF PSYCHIC HEALING

NOTHING in the long run can compensate us for wrong thinking, and a false philosophy, whatever immediate benefits it brings, will eventually work more evil than any bodily disease. Even health ought not to be purchased at the expense of truth, for truth, whatever its consequences, is the only sure and final refuge for the soul of man.

Confused and erroneous ideas are peculiarly easy to form on the subject of psychic healing, and false opinions on this subject more easily lead to disastrous results than do errors in other fields of enquiry. The subject-matter of such sciences as astronomy and mathematics is comparatively remote from human conduct, and a man may live none the worse for holding heretical opinions about the planets, or totally erroneous views upon the differential calculus; but a theory of psychic healing must sooner or later raise questions about the will of God, the nature of man, and the insoluble problem of evil which touch us all so closely that a false answer may give a wrong twist to our whole

Healing

attitude towards life. If we answer these questions wrongly, we may be tempted to disbelieve the freedom of man's will, or become enslaved to chimæras and strong delusions, or we may find ourselves committed to a theory of the mystery of suffering which makes the cross of Christ a meaningless or a misleading symbol. It is a subject whose fascination is extremely potent, partly because it has the charm of the unfamiliar and mysterious, but chiefly because the pursuit of it promises concrete, immediate and most desirable results; so that for one person who is attracted by a novel theory in the sphere of abstract knowledge there are hundreds who will listen eagerly to any new teacher, even if he makes such demands upon their patience and credulity as Mrs. Eddy, provided he offers mental ease and physical well-being.

We may take the fact of psychic healing for granted; there are not many people to be found to-day who are so hardy as to deny the evidence, or to seek to explain it as a delusion of neurotic persons. There are thousands who have some kind of personal knowledge of this kind of healing.

But mere acquiescence in the reality of psychic healing is insufficient, if we are to see its full significance. We ought to try to assemble all

Facts and Theories of Psychic Healing

the facts we can, leaving out none of them, or at least to suggest some headings under which they may be tabulated.

First in order come the miracles of healing wrought by our Blessed Lord Himself, and those worked in His name by His disciples. Christians have always believed in these, but the average Englishman has tacitly assumed that they belong to a past age of miracles, and that since the New Testament such phenomena have ceased: that any records of such healings in the Church of later days were spurious legends.

We cannot, however, if we accept the fact of psychic healing in our own day, refuse to take into account the voluminous evidence for "ecclesiastical miracles" which abounds in nearly every period of the Church's history. Most of us prefer to give to these a different degree of assent from that which we give to the miracles of the New Testament, partly because the spiritual background out of which they spring is less pure, and partly because the mass of evidence for them is mixed with a good deal of demonstrably spurious matter. Nevertheless, there is certainly a vast number of facts which are included within that circle of beliefs and ideas which we call Catholicism, and one fancies that most continental Catholics would smile at the Protestant convert to divine

Healing

healing who talks as if such healings were a part of the heritage of Christ neglected by the Church until their rediscovery by living men. They would certainly claim that the holy Church has always possessed and made use of this miraculous power, and they would quote, as examples of a continuous and unbroken tradition, miracles wrought at the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, well-attested healings attributed to the Curé d'Ars in the Victorian era, and miracles done at Lourdes to-day.

Another class of religious healings are not connected with the Catholic tradition at all. Non-Christian cults, both ancient and modern, from the worship of Æsculapius to modern Islam, profess to show phenomena of this kind. Above all, there is the evidence of Christian Science, which is able to claim a multitude of incontestable cases of healing, though it bases its claim upon a metaphysics which we are bound as Catholics to repudiate, and which most of us would agree to call intellectually disreputable.

We must also include other facts which are uncomplicated by any supernatural presuppositions, Christian or non-Christian.

There are faith-healers of a purely empiric type who practise healing, but advance no theory as to how they get their results, and there are the psycho-therapeutists, of whom the

Facts and Theories of Psychic Healing

latest are M. Coué and his colleagues of the New Nancy School. These men work on a theory of a very definitely scientific type, based upon a materialistic psychology. They claim to have dissociated psycho-therapy from mysticism and superstition;* and whether we agree with them or no, their position has the advantage of being one which provides a basis for reasoned argument; their facts have been observed under rigorous scientific tests, and they have formulated a methodical theory of explanation.

A short collection of some representative instances from these various groups of facts is given in an appendix, in the belief that it may be of use towards giving the wide view of the subject which is necessary in order that we may form some general idea to guide us in connection with the revival of divine healing in our own communion. It should at least remind us that healing by non-medical means is, and has always been, a not unusual thing.

The facts are voluminous and plain, it is when we come to theories of explanation that we get into the region of dispute.

We have, for instance, a distinguished man of science, M. Coué, and a well-known Christian faith healer, Mr. Hickson, both doing the same

* Preface to "Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion" (Baudouin).

Healing

thing in so far as they effect healings without the use of surgery or medicine. If we believe Mr. Hickson's explanation, the two systems of healing are different; if we believe M. Coué, they are fundamentally the same. Both accounts of the matter cannot be correct.

We may make the point clearer by a concrete case which hardly falls under any of the headings suggested above. About forty years ago there lived at Chelmsford a boy of thirteen, named Alfred Lester, who had been afflicted from infancy with paralysis of the lower limbs.

His parents tried Christian Science treatment without success; he was then sent to the London Hospital, but was discharged as incurable. Then came to his home a travelling representative of St. Jacob's Oil, who paraded the town with a coach and outriders, advertising the virtues of his liniment. The boy begged his parents to buy him a bottle, declaring that it would cure him. After the use of this simple remedy he was at once restored to the normal use of his limbs and began to attend school. The case was quoted for years in the advertisements of the medicine.

Now this cure does not claim to be in any way due to supernatural agency, yet it is a perfectly genuine example of the kind of healing with which we are concerned. If we say it is

Facts and Theories of Psychic Healing

due to suggestion, we lay ourselves open to the fair retort of the sceptic, "Your healings by the use of consecrated oil and prayer are also merely suggestion coloured by religion." It must be admitted that the only observer who is entirely unembarrassed in the explanation is the psychologist of the New Nancy School. Whether the healing be a mediæval miracle, a miracle of Lourdes, of Christian Science, or a modern case of divine healing, he gives an explanation which, so far as it goes, will cover all the ground. He can classify the phenomena and give some reasoned and scientific account of them. It is best to use the scientific theory, and let it take us as far as it can, for, like so many theories, it seems to be true in what it asserts, and only untrue in what it denies. Suggestion is a common element in every psychic healing, and we must clear our minds as to what we mean by the word.

We have to rescue it from its materialistic associations, and to realise the fact that it is no more derogatory to our Saviour's honour to admit that He used suggestion in working His miracles of healing than to admit that He used Aramaic in preaching the Sermon on the Mount. Suggestion is simply a name for a method of communication of ideas to the unconscious self as language is a method of

Healing

communication with the conscious mind. The ideas thus communicated may be either true or false, noxious or beneficent; the witch doctor may make use of it to hurt, as the saint or scientist may make use of it to heal, and in some degree we all make use of it every day.

The importance of the unconscious self, and the unexpectedly large part it plays in our lives, is becoming more and more widely recognised. Bergson, Coué, Freud, and the devotees of Psychological Research are all from their respective and different points of view concerned with its study.

The characteristic conception of M. Bergson is his trust in "intuition" as opposed to intellect. Intuition "slumbers in the depths of our being. It seems to possess much of the knowledge which is of the greatest importance to life. By the study of intuition, we are able to solve certain problems which we might never have been able to solve on purely intellectual lines."* The characteristic conception of the psycho-analyst is the "complex," a group of repressed desires, images, or experiences existing in the subconscious and affecting us without our knowledge. The characteristic of the Nancy School of psycho-therapeutics is "suggestion." "Suggestion," says M. Baudouin (using the term in his own specialised sense

* Baudouin, "Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion," p. 275.

Facts and Theories of Psychic Healing

as an idea which produces a modification), "is to the will what the complex is to the sentiment, and what intuition is to the intellect."*

The late Mr. Frederic Myers, in his study of such phenomena as thought transference, apparitions, trances, clairvoyance, and spiritualistic phenomena generally, was interested in the subconscious, or subliminal consciousness as he called it, as a receiving and transmitting medium of communication from external agencies. If we are to see the theories of psychotherapy in their proper perspective and proportion, we must bear in mind the work of all these explorers of the unconscious. By so doing we are fortified in the belief of its reality and importance in our life, and we are at the same time reminded that its reaction upon the physical organism and its relation to bodily health, wonderful as it is, is only a part of its total meaning and function.

We need not hesitate to say that all psychic healing finds its explanation in the power of the invisible self over the body, that the larger part of the invisible self is "unconscious" and not amenable to ordinary means of persuasion or to the control of the conscious will, and that the means of communication with the unconscious is what is called suggestion.

* Baudouin, "Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion," p. 275.

Healing

“ There is a great difference between mental healing and spiritual healing,” says *The Healer*, a magazine edited by Mr. Hickson. “ The one shows the power of mind over matter; the other reveals the power of the spirit over both mind and matter.” We may be entirely convinced of the powers of Mr. Hickson, and there is no sort of question of his personal devotion, but we are sometimes left with an uneasy feeling that his philosophy is dubious. His explanation might be taken to imply that man possesses two faculties, one to be labelled “ spirit ” and the other “ mind ”; that the spiritual healer addresses himself to the first, and the scientist to the second, with the implication that M. Coué omits “ the spirit ” in his treatment. But have we any experience of a mind existing apart from spirit, or of a spirit which can be communicated with apart from consciousness ? “ Spirit ” is a term belonging to the categories of the faith, with which M. Coué has no concern, and “ mind ” or “ consciousness ” is a term taken from the categories of psychology; the mixture of categories makes bad philosophy. Man, as we Christians believe, “ is ” a spirit, rather than “ has ” a spirit, and this spirit, which in man can only express itself through the vehicle of body, has the faculty of consciousness to which we give the name of

Facts and Theories of Psychic Healing

mind. It is hard to attach any meaning to a distinction between healings which work "on the spirit plane," "the psychic plane," and the "mental plane" respectively.* The Gospel of St. John speaks to our spirit, but its message can only reach our spirit through our consciousness; our mental processes as we read a play of Shakespeare are no other than those which are at work when we study a chapter of St. John; though it is true that St. John illuminates a larger tract of our spirit than Shakespeare does, and brings into play powers within us which the dramatist leaves unaffected.

Both the spiritual healer and the psychotherapist work through the same medium, namely, the patient's subconsciousness: this much they have in common, and it is a large extent of common ground. What the spiritual healer has, which the materialistic scientist has not, is the power to use the fact that man is an immortal spirit in a spirit-governed world; but even the spiritual healer can only reach his patient by methods which it is the business of psychology to investigate, describe, and, if he can, perfect.

The auto-suggestion theory of M. Coué, on the other hand, seems to make the idea of

* Some would add "magnetism" as a further distinct method, but this view is now old-fashioned.

Healing

divine intervention in psychic healing unnecessary if not impossible. "Most of you have come expecting to find a healer, a maker of miracles," said M. Coué.* "Well, if you believe that, disbelieve it. I am no healer, no miracle-worker; for the simple reason that there are no miracles or healers."

All suggestion, he proclaims, is auto-suggestion, and if we define it as a mode of communication he would limit its scope to such messages as pass from the mind to the body of the subject, or to internal processes within the individual mind. It is a house telephone, in his opinion, and not connected with the outside world.

One may doubt whether the great experimental knowledge which he has of suggestion qualifies M. Coué to deny the possibility of miracle, any more than a knowledge of languages qualifies a man to deny the existence of God. The very convenience of this part of the theory should make it suspect, for there is always a temptation, as in Christian Science or in any form of faith-healing, not to be over-critical of the veracity of a theory provided that it works, and that it adds to the force or permanence of the suggestion.

The patient is taught by M. Coué to trust in powers inherent in himself, powers which he

* *The Times*, June 8, 1922.

Facts and Theories of Psychic Healing

can set in motion and keep in active operation quite apart from any co-operation of the healer. But the fact that I can talk to myself does not disprove the fact that I can also listen to my friend, and the hypothesis that "all suggestion is auto-suggestion" must ultimately stand or fall with the truth of the supernatural or the materialistic interpretations of the universe. It is impossible to prove it, and there are some facts, such as the phenomena of thought transference and contagious states of mind like panics, which are hardly compatible with the belief that our subconsciousness is impervious to suggestion from an agency external to itself. This negative part of their theory is for practical purposes a side issue which need not seriously affect the permanent value of the applied psychology of the New Nancy School.

One point which M. Coué's experience has disproved is the belief that, for the mere obtaining of a psychic healing, any particular moral or religious predisposition is essential. The healer may demand prayer and the confession of sins before exercising this ministry; he is right in so doing, and the total benefit must be enhanced thereby, but nothing of the kind is asked of the patients in M. Coué's clinic.

The gravest indictment which can be brought

Healing

against the scientific psychic healing movement is that it tends to invert the proper course of man's progress, which should ever be away from the physical to the spiritual, and not *vice versa*. It is a fault of emphasis which may affect those who allow their interest in it to become exaggerated. By concentrating upon the body those unconscious powers which lie below the surface of the everyday mind, we may be so using man's chief instrument of communion with the infinite as to confine it to comparatively limited and humble tasks. In a significant phrase Miss Evelyn Underhill reminds us that the very methods which the mystics in every age have used for contemplation are those by which we are now enthusiastically trying to cure a cold in the head. It is the materialistic tendency of the age, not any preference for spiritual as opposed to chemical medicament, which makes this practice fashionable, and we are losers in the long run if we divert the mental process of the mystic's contemplation and the poet's dream to the service of the stomach and the arteries. Even a completely healthy world would offer us by itself no prospect of a golden age; nothing but seeking the kingdom of God can bring that consummation nearer.

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF PSYCHIC HEALING

FAITH-HEALING, as the very name suggests, is inevitably connected with two departments of human interest which we have most unfortunately grown accustomed to keep apart from one another—our faith and natural science. It is a subject with important bearings on religious practice and belief, and it is also a healing agency which natural science cannot afford to ignore. On the whole, its importance for good or evil as a factor in religious thought is likely to be greater even than its value as a healing agency; certainly it raises questions in the sphere of faith which are as momentous as any which it raises in the sphere of healing.

These questions concern not only the nature of man, as a spirit functioning through the vehicle of flesh and blood, in a world which is permeated and governed by God, who is Spirit, they also concern the nature of Almighty God, and the mystery of evil. Sooner or later nearly all its students and practitioners evolve theories with religious applications which are extremely

Healing

far-reaching; and we are sometimes asked to accept them on the evidence of some particular school of faith-healing.

It is, however, fatal to argue back from the genuine character of the healing to the genuineness of the philosophy of the healer. No one could possibly embrace Lourdes, Mrs. Eddy, and M. Coué in the same religious synthesis.

[The ultimate problem is that of human suffering and its relation to the will of God. Christian Science, as is well known, bases everything, so far as theory is concerned, upon a denial that pain or disease can exist.

Man, it asserts, is essentially and by his nature spirit, which is true, and he is not matter, which is absurd. Its votaries claim that it is as impossible for him to be diseased as it would be for God. Pain, they say, is an illusion, not a fact. "Your body is one with the Life that creates it, and can no more be diseased than life, or sunshine, or God can be diseased."

We have in every Christian Science healing, at one end of the chain of events a false but very powerful suggestion, followed at the other end of the chain by a genuine healing, just as if a hypnotist should cure a patient of a headache by suggesting to him that he had no head.

Many of our own spiritual healers make very dogmatic assertions which imply that sickness

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

and pain are invariably contrary to the will of God, but our assent to the proposition must not be based upon the success of their healing powers; we must form our judgment upon securer grounds than that—namely, upon the revelation of Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church, being convinced that nothing but the truth, even if it be hard and painful truth, can in the long run advance the total well-being of man.

The circumstances of the earthly life of Christ make that period of years exceptional; it is best to begin our study of the scriptural evidence after Pentecost, when our Lord's bodily presence was withdrawn and the kingdom of grace began.

As a matter of fact, divine healings, though plentiful, do not assume a very cardinal or prominent position in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in the Epistles of St. Paul. The Apostles, of course, used healing, but they do not appear to have preached it; they never put the healing of the body in the forefront of the gospel which they had to give to the world; it is brought in as something predisposing men to receive their essential message, and they obviously look upon the resurrection of the body as something standing on a different level of importance from the healing of the body. Probably the best piece

Healing

of evidence which we have of the apostolic attitude to disease from the patient's point of view is that of St. Paul, himself a healer and himself a sufferer. "Lest I should be exalted above measure," he tells the Corinthians, "through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me, and He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

[If this unknown disorder was the same as that to which the Apostle refers in his epistle to the Galatians, it must have been an affair of long standing, and we may be sure that the three efforts of prayer were no passing nor casual event in the Apostle's life; they remind us naturally of the thrice-repeated prayer of our Lord in Gethsemane. St. Paul both recognised and exercised gifts of healing, but in his own case he learned to accept sickness cheerfully. The general estimate which he lays down is that suffering here is not worthy to be compared with the glory that comes hereafter; it is a kind

* 2 Cor. xii. 7-9.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

of *mal de mer* of the waves of this troublesome world, to be held as of small account because, though real, it is transient.

So he says, " I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us " (Rom. viii. 18); and he declares that " our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal " (2 Cor. iv. 17-18).

The question of God's will in regard to disease and suffering is a metaphysical question, which resolves itself into the insoluble mystery of evil. Probably the best that we can say is that health is conditionally God's will, whereas His glory is absolutely and unconditionally His will. On the other hand, the agony of our Lord was conditionally the will of God, accepted and made His own by our Incarnate Lord; for the world being what it is, God's absolute will, the glory of Christ in heaven, and the final glorification of humanity could not have been accomplished without His sufferings. " It became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory,

Healing

to make the author of our salvation perfect through sufferings."

Disease is one class of the general genus "sufferings," which includes such pain and disability as comes from bodily misfortune which is not disease, broken bones, wounds and the like, poverty, "mourning," or grief for the dead and for the sorrow and suffering of the world, broken hearts and causes of mental sorrow personal to ourself.

The enthusiast for faith-healing is apt to isolate one class of "sufferings"—namely, morbid conditions of the body—to use some phrase about "the tortures of loathsome disease," and ask us, "Can we believe that God would infect children with, say, diphtheria?" "In the realm of nature," says Mr. Hickson, "where there is little or no resistance to God's working, the autumn leaf and the ripe fruit drop gently down in the fulness of time, and a healing touch has been laid on the branch from which it almost imperceptibly falls. Will it not be so with us, and will not death be the peaceful passing of the longing, waiting soul into the nearer presence of God?"*

In the realm of nature, it is true, there is little or no resistance to God's working; but in

* "The Healing of Christ in His Church," by J. M. Hickson, pp. 35 and 36.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

the realm of human will there is much. Mankind as a race is heir to many ills which are the consequence of racial sin. "A distinguished professor of biology," says Bishop Gore,* "who is not an apologist for Christian doctrine, Sir E. Ray-Lankester," assures us that not only the mass of human diseases is due to sin, but that "every disease to which animals (and probably plants also) are liable, excepting as a transient and very exceptional occurrence, is due to man's interference."

Science itself teaches us that the mystery of evil touches man in a manner in which it does not affect the lower creation; the problem of evil is there and cannot be ignored. But to return to the general phenomenon of "sufferings," what precise differentiation is there between the evil suffered by the human organism when wounded, and by the human organism when diseased? between the pain and disability caused by the impact of shrapnel, or as a result of a street accident, and the suffering and disability caused by a bacillus? Does Mr. Hickson look forward to a golden age when the casualty wards of our hospitals will be closed? There is a difference between these two kinds of bodily suffering, and our Blessed Lord knew only the first kind; neither in life

* "The One Religion," p. 158.

Healing

nor in death did His sacred body know corruption. Just as the corruption which is for us a natural sequel to bodily death was not permitted to touch His body in the grave, so disease was alien to His perfect physical life; but nevertheless, it is not logical to isolate and thus to exaggerate this one department of the whole sum total of human sufferings. Nature makes disease loathsome to us, but grace shows us that by contrast with the loathsomeness of sin it is not in itself abhorrent at all; it may even be our duty to overcome our instinctive horror of it. Doctors and nurses must do this to a large extent, and the saints have done it. Both science and sanctity agree in this respect.

It is contrary to our experience to expect that the best people, those who live on a plane far above the normal level of mankind, should drop painlessly like ripe fruit from the tree. It was not so with Francis of Assisi, who died at forty-five broken in body though unconquerable in soul. His biographers tell us of his sickness and his pain, his gastric troubles and his consequent debility, and contrast that with his spirit "as of one whose youth is renewed."*

St. Katharine of Siena, one of the most vital and commanding personalities in all history, as well as one of the most lovely characters

* "St. Francis of Assisi," by Father Cuthbert, p. 350.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

of all the saints, struggled unceasingly with ill-health and died when she was thirty-three. "Her cruel sufferings increased daily, her skin adhered to her bones, and she was tormented with a continual thirst . . . her body was visibly consumed, but her soul rose joyfully and courageously above all."* Of these two saints St. Katharine was a marvellous exponent of divine healing; there can be no reasonable doubt that she exercised this gift with exceptional power. St. Francis, though he possessed the power, seems to have used it very sparingly. Both of them were masters of the science of the human soul, to say nothing of their intimate and first-hand knowledge of our Lord, but they would have looked upon the modern identification of eupepsia with the unconditional will of God with great surprise. Healing, they would have said, is an overflow of God's mercy, but in itself a little thing; seen in its proper proportion it was a very small part of their great ministry, and chiefly it was a means to an end—the glory of God through the salvation of man.

The following story quoted by Mrs. Oliphant in her "Francis of Assisi" throws a quaint light upon St. Francis' estimate of the value of miracles. One of the brethren, Pietro de

* "Catherine of Siena," by Josephine Butler, p. 235.

Healing

Catanio, who died in 1223, was buried in the church of the Portiuncula, and after his death a series of miracles took place at his grave. The Assisians came trooping down, some with their sick, most out of curiosity; they thronged the church and filled the air with the hum of a perpetual crowd. Francis went at once to the grave in which reposed his faithful disciple, and commanded Pietro, by the obedience he had always given him in life, to work no more miracles, since the brethren were disturbed and prayer was hindered by the multitudes which came to his tomb. The miracles ceased, and peace was restored. Suggestion may have caused the miracles; the counter-suggestion of St. Francis, couched in a form far more potent than any rebukes directed to the crowd itself, may have caused the phenomena to stop. We can be as rationalistic about it as we please; but the main point is that St. Francis had the choice between a miracle-working tomb and a quiet church for prayer, and that he chose the latter. Probably his follower St. Anthony of Padua would not have agreed with him.

“If suffering is really sent by God,” says Mr. Hickson,* “no means should be used to defeat God’s work, no doctor of any sort should

* “The Healing of Christ in His Church,” by J. M. Hickson, p. 29.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

be called in. . . . Yet we should be horrified if a mother found her child with an artery cut and refused to send for the doctor to tie it up; we should demand that she should be punished by law. If it is right to use doctors for healing, it must be also right to use spiritual healing, if God has shown us the truth of it."

We must all agree that it is right to use spiritual healing, if God has shown us the truth of it, and we must agree that it is right to use doctors. If we ever had any doubt of that our Lord would have set it at rest for ever, for He healed the sick. He healed the sick—that is to say, individual cases of disease with whom He was brought into touch. He did not abolish disease either from the Holy Land, or from His apostolic company, as St. Paul bears witness, or from the primitive Church, as we see in the case of St. Timothy and his "often infirmities." He left it as an enemy against which His followers were to wage war, but he held out no prospect of its ultimate abolition on this earth. The logic of the modern enthusiast for faith-healing, if once we grant his premises, would carry us too far; we might come to feel that sickness is akin to sin in a way in which it is not akin, and we might rob suffering of its glory. There is a natural tendency to fortify a healing suggestion by exaggerations, or even

Healing

by falsities, such as "disease is contrary to the will of God," or even "disease does not exist." To build a logical theory upon salutary deception is to invite consequences which may be deplorable.

"Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake," cried St. Paul, "and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." Sickness is to many a "necessary" mortification (as opposed to voluntary mortification). It is included by Father Baker* among the crosses and afflictions which we cannot always avoid. "Such are sickness, want, disgraces, loss of friends, temptations, desolations, etc." Of these he says, "Inestimable benefits attend them, they are of great security, free from all peril of error, indiscretion, or pride."

On this most difficult subject we should do well to read Father Benson,† the founder of the Society of St. John the Evangelist at Cowley.

"Health," he says, "is God's gift; sickness, though it may be a divine chastening, is a Satanic power whether great or little. . . . We have to

* "Holy Wisdom," p. 219.

† "Letters of Richard Meux Benson," vol. i., pp. 329-330. Letter to a friend on the Teaching of Spiritual Healers.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

resist Satan, and we must not be indifferent to those hindrances by which he strives to prevent our doing God's will. . . . To allow ourselves to sink down in sickness is a great sin. It is sluggishness. . . . We must use such rules of health as we know whether by experience or by science to be most helpful in shaking off the sluggishness which sickness occasions. 'Take a little wine.' The weakness is a condition of our fallen nature for which God has appointed remedies. To refuse those remedies is pride.

"Every kind of trouble must increase our faith. It would be no blessing merely to have a trouble removed. . . . Sickness would be no blessing to us if we could make quite sure of getting rid of it by any process physical or spiritual. We should forget God by getting our health, whereas our sickness is allowed to make us feel our dependence upon God. . . . Faith does not jump over difficulties, but bears them with loving submission, however heavy and however persistent. There is no promise that I shall get health because I ask God for it, any more than that I should get £100 to pay a bill which is beyond my means. In both cases there is a duty of looking prayerfully to God to help us to bear our trouble, but no promise that the trouble shall immediately be taken away. . . . Faith does not mean a firm conviction that God

Healing

will do what *we* want. Faith is a holy energy by which we rise up to do what *God* wants. . . .

“A miracle is an abnormal action. It implies an abnormal elevation of the soul in self-forgetfulness, looking up to glorify God. When people lay so much stress on prayer as a means of cure, they reverse the process, they want the health for *their own* sake. . . . The prayer of faith must develop the power of the Cross, not set it aside. . . . The true Christian sufferer does not look to be saved by getting well, but by getting holy, strong in the Lord.”*

That which our Lord came to give, which constitutes the excellence and well-being of man in this world and the next, is life, and life is a greater matter than health.

Let it be granted that the absolute perfection of human nature, as seen in Christ Himself, includes in its flawless completion health of body; still life and health are not synonymous and convertible terms. We have all sinned, and come short of that “glory of God” which we see in the face of Jesus Christ; and a moral shortcoming, however slight, constitutes a graver defect than any shortcoming that is physical.

He who lacks perfect charity fails more seriously than he who suffers from a defective

* “Letters of Richard Meux Benson,” pp. 329-330. Letter to a friend on the Teaching of Spiritual Healers.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

circulation; need of the aid of glasses is a lesser deprivation than defective faith; a tendency to bronchitis is a smaller evil than a selfish disposition. There was more active vitality, more of that life which Christ came to impart, in the shattered frame of a St. Katharine than in a regiment of stalwart and eupeptic athletes. Not only did she live her own life like a bright flame, but she revitalised her world.

Robert Louis Stevenson, anæmic and consumptive as he was, radiates life, courage and the spirit of high adventure; whereas many a writer overflowing with robust health of body shows himself a source of infectious mawkishness, and distils the faint sickly flavour of sentimentality.

Ill-health, it is true, often depresses the moral and spiritual tone of the sufferer. But instances are not hard to find where courage has not only triumphed over pain, but where it seems that without the struggle against infirmity, the finer virtues of the spirit could never have reached their wonderful development.

The distinctive and positive teaching of Christianity is that "sufferings" (including diseases) and death are not waste matter, or non-utilisable evils, but that they can be transformed into agencies of salvation and transmuted into the gold of sacrifice.

Healing

There are many fine passages which bear on this point in Dr. Moberly's "Atonement and Personality," especially in his chapter on Penitence.* The transmutation of chastisement into penance there described is an ideal, but it is an ideal of which we dare not lose sight. It is that which is expressed in St. Paul's great saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

The Christian philosophy of suffering is also well drawn out in M. Paul Bourget's novel "Le Sens de la Mort." In it he shows how apart from Christianity pain and death are not only useless but non-utilisable and senseless things, whereas to the Christian suffering may be a sharing of the pain of Him who, according to the version of Isaiah quoted by St. Matthew, "took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." There surely is a vocation to suffering, and suffering itself, since Christ suffered, may become a holy thing.

When all is said, death is generally looked upon as a graver evil than sickness. Are we to say death "is not God's will"? It is obviously an inseparable accident of human life, and death, we are told, entered into the world through

* "Atonement and Personality," pp. 38 and 39.

The Religious Implications of Psychic Healing

sin. Eternal life is God's absolute will, but it can only be reached through physical death, and physical death is His will under the conditions of fallen humanity.

Disease is one of those things which we are put into the world to fight against. To acquiesce in it when it remains in our power to combat it, is sloth and cowardice—it is slothful and cowardly to accept our own bad health with fatalism. It is far more common, and less morally defensible, to accept with pious resignation the sufferings of others weaker than ourselves. In this sense it is wicked to say that sickness or poverty or any preventable suffering is the will of God.

Nevertheless all of our sufferings are not preventable, and we, who are warned as Christians that we must bear our cross, must beware that we do not make men enemies of the Cross, nor misrepresent it as an unholy thing.

CHAPTER III

HOLY UNCTION

THE study of psychic healing is a branch of applied psychology, and psychology is the only science which can give any reasoned account of the *modus operandi* of this kind of healing.

If we are to consider Holy Unction as a sacrament, we may ask ourselves whether the study of psychology has any bearing on the sacramental principle as such, and if so to what extent we can talk about a sacrament in terms of psychology.

The sacraments act upon man through a medium which is not exclusively that of the conscious everyday mind; there is an obvious difference between the effective process of a sermon and that of Holy Communion. The doctrine of sacraments also postulates the truth that grace can be communicated through the medium of material things, so that the material may be charged with the spiritual.

Let us for a moment leave the higher aspects of the sacramental principle aside, and consider what evidence we have for a relation, if any, between the spirit and material things exterior

Holy Unction

to ourselves, for it is not without some bearing upon a question which must often confront the student of psycho-therapy—namely, healing by means of relics.

Our own bodies, these living organisms of flesh and blood, are the vehicle of spirit, but the world of matter that is not informed by life seems far less likely to become a conductor of spiritual influence.

It is more easy to suppose that suggestion can be conveyed from living person to person than through the texture of a fabric, the walls of a house, or the bones of a dead man. But we cannot assert that it is impossible. The Mosaic Law certainly speaks as if the holy things of God's sanctuary were charged with some force as dangerous to the careless touch of man as material electric energy, and therefore as only to be approached with reverence and ceremonial precautions. Aaron is not to come at all times into the holy place within the veil, but once a year only and on the appointed day, "that he die not." He is only to enter the sanctuary after ceremonial lustrations, and vested in holy garments; when he enters he is to cover the mercy-seat with a cloud of incense, "that he die not" (Lev. xvi. 2 and 16). We read in the Second Book of Samuel, of Uzzah, who "put forth his hand to the ark of God"

Healing

to steady it when the oxen shook it as they drew it up the rough road to Jerusalem, and died for his error.

There is plenty of evidence in the Old Testament that places as well as things were accounted in themselves as "holy" or untouchable because charged with the supernatural, as it were haunted by the Divine presence. Such were Horeb, the mount of God in the peninsula of Sinai, and Bethel in Palestine.

The record of the raising of a dead man to life by contact with the bones of Elisha (2 Kings xiii. 21) is evidence at least of an early belief in the healing power of relics.

In the New Testament, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, points to the physical consequences of sickness and even death which had resulted from rash and profane reception of the Holy Communion.

There is in the Gospels the instance of the healing of the woman who touched our Lord's garment, and in the Acts of the Apostles the record of "special" miracles wrought by means of handkerchiefs and aprons taken to the sick from the person of St. Paul. The epithet applied to these miracles seems to imply that there was something exceptional about them; they may have been a concession to the mentality of Ephesus, the city of magical practices.

Holy Unction

In Church history there are innumerable cases of cures wrought by means of relics. It is the typical form of ecclesiastical miracle. One of the earliest instances is recorded by St. Augustine, who tells us, in the ninth book of his "Confessions," of healings wrought by the bodies of the martyrs Gervasus and Protasius in Milan. He speaks of the matter incidentally, accepting it, but not attaching much importance to it, as an incident to which God had guided his memory, as "great mercies which I had forgotten and passed by." It is at least evidence of current belief, if not of fact.

These stories are subject to the general conditions attending records of ecclesiastical miracles, and many are of dubious authenticity. Moreover, the possibility of auto-suggestion is always hard to exclude. In some cases this seems the only explanation if the healings are genuine, for instances of cures wrought by relics of persons recognised soon after their death as far from being saints are not unknown.*

* "Thomas erle of Lancastre, who was a noble, wise and holy knight," says Froissart, "hath done syth many faire miracles in Pomfret, where he was beheaded." The said Earl Thomas, who was executed most deservedly in 1322, was a rebellious cousin of Edward II. and a scoundrel even by the standards of his age; but "to make a saint of a rebel was the most energetic means of protesting against the King" (Jusserand, "English Wayfaring Life," p. 341). So Simon de Montfort's relics wrought miracles, though

Healing

St. Thomas Aquinas did not hold the belief that relics are, in themselves, "vessels and instruments of divine grace and miraculous power"; he taught that they were to be venerated, but only in order that honour might be paid to the saints, and he believed that God worked miracles "in their presence" (*in earum præsentia*).

The Council of Trent, reverting to the popular belief, laid down that "God gives many benefits to mankind through the sacred bodies of the martyrs, through which (*per quæ*) many benefits are bestowed upon mankind."

In any case the mere volume of accumulated evidence is an impressive witness to a widely held belief, and the fact that some cases of healing by relics were due to auto-suggestion is no proof that all such cases can be so explained.

An unqualified denial of the possibility of any connection between our human spirit and external matter would exclude the validity of sacramental teaching. We may prefer to keep sacraments as a class by themselves, having no similarity to anything else in man's experience, or we may prefer to think of them as in some

he died excommunicate. Edward II. had to take severe measures to stop the cultus of Thomas of Lancaster, as Henry III. in 1266 was driven to forbid Simon de Montfort being reckoned as a saint.

Holy Unction

respects instances of a large class of phenomena, but we must agree that the doctrine that all suggestion is auto-suggestion and a purely subjective view of sacramental grace are parallel lines of thought.

He who believes that his own faith, that is his own mind or soul, and nothing in the sacrament itself, brings grace to him, would at least find the strict auto-suggestion hypothesis familiar and congenial; the two beliefs go hand in hand, even if one does not necessarily involve the other.

But sacraments are not magic, though they convey grace by the medium of material things, and in a manner which is not exclusively conditioned by the operation of our intellect and will (for an infant receives the grace of Holy Baptism). The whole conception of sacraments is on a different plane from that of psycho-therapy. The characteristic effect of one is a moral benefit, of the other a physical, and the whole history of the culture of relics goes to show the danger of superstition, which is non-moral religion.

In the reception of every sacrament there must be the fullest possible co-operation of intelligence and will, and in the baptised infant each latent power as it develops into conscious life must be sanctified by the grace of baptism.

Healing

The life that is lived in the power of Holy Baptism must be a completely volitional and a consciously Christian life.

Sacraments are for the whole man, spirit and soul and body, the conscious and subconscious. They are designed to meet the needs of the spirit of man which can only find expression in the vehicle of a material body, but neither their *modus operandi* nor their effect is confined to any one part of man in isolation from the rest of his nature.

The *modus operandi* of the psycho-therapist is directed to the subconsciousness; it is not essential that the patient should understand what is being done; accordingly "pure" suggestion seems to help a man, or if it be malevolent suggestion to hurt a man magically, "in spite of himself," because it appeals exclusively to the lower levels of the mind.

No sacrament, however, helps a man "in spite of himself." It is essential that the recipient shall know what the minister of the sacrament is doing, and that the sacrament shall appeal to the intelligence so far as it is there.

We do not deny that the infant who dies after baptism, while intelligence is yet dormant, or the feeble-minded whose intelligence is not completely there at all is capable of receiving sacramental grace; but we do not say that the

Holy Unction

recipient of a sacrament should forgo any conscious exercise of intellect or will, as do the psycho-therapists.

The effect as well as the *modus operandi* of a sacrament is designed for the whole man, and since man is an immortal spirit, the primary and characteristic effect of every sacrament must be spiritual. The true end of sacraments is to make us holy; they impart sanctifying grace for the building up of character, and for the cure of spiritual infirmities even when they are specially given for the comfort of the sick.

Thus Holy Communion is given to preserve the body and soul unto everlasting life; eternal life, not temporal health, is its essential benefit; it guarantees to the faithful receiver that Christ "shall raise him up at the last day"; this is "the pledge of future glory" attached to the sacrament by our Lord's own promise, and though our Prayer Book rightly lays stress upon the preservation of body as well as soul through means of it, we have no such pledge of any therapeutic virtues in our communions. Since man is one and spirit reacts upon flesh, we may well believe that Holy Communion is literally health-giving, but we must carefully distinguish what is primary from what is secondary, and what is promised by a covenant from what is a contingent result.

Healing

The essential and characteristic feature of a sacrament, then, is sanctifying grace bearing fruit in eternal life, and even if psychology could help us to understand one or two points about the mode of their working, psychology has nothing to say about holiness or immortality.

The sacrament specially designed for the benefit of the sick is Holy Unction, which was, as St. James tells us, an apostolic practice in use among the first generation of Christians in Jerusalem. This sacrament is a part of the inheritance both of the Western and the Eastern Church, and so of the whole Church Catholic, but since the first Prayer Book of 1549, no official provision has been made for its administration in the Church of England. There is to-day a growing demand for its official restoration, but some controversy and confusion of thought exist in England as to the manner in which we desire to see it restored.

When the rite is in use as a normal part of the Church's life received by unbroken inheritance from the past, there is no dispute as to its true sacramental character. The Russian Catechism says: "Unction with oil is a sacrament in which, while the body is anointed with oil, God's grace is invoked on the sick to heal him of spiritual and bodily infirmities." The teach-

Holy Unction

ing of Western Christendom is that Unction of the sick is a sacrament in which, by anointing with oil and prayer of a priest, health of soul, and even of body if God wills, is conferred upon a baptised person who is in at least remote danger of death.

Probably in Russia, and among the Orthodox generally, where the use of medical science is of more recent development and far more limited application than in Western Europe, the physical healing is more emphasised, but both East and West agree on the main point that the healing of spiritual infirmities is the first object of this sacrament, and that bodily healing is a secondary though a real part of its content.

Among Anglicans there has recently arisen a use of Unction hardly to be distinguished from faith-healing. This use is directed to physical health as the primary object to be attained, and many of its practitioners would encourage recourse to Unction in any malady for which we should feel justified in sending for a doctor.

These are the two points of novelty about which perplexity arises, the using of Unction with physical healing as its primary object, and the comparative freedom from restriction as to its use.

If Unction is resorted to merely as a religious form of psychic healing, there does not seem to

Healing

be any reasonable objection to either of these points; we must simply acknowledge their novelty and agree that we are not trying to conform our practice to that of the rest of Catholic Christendom. But if our object is to restore "the lost pleiad of the Anglican firmament," if we are hoping to recover a sacrament, then the matter stands on a different footing. The sacraments pledge to the faithful the authority of the Church, not only the reputations of individuals, and we have no right in a matter of corporate responsibility to let boldness of experiment and ventures of faith provide a substitute for carefully thought out principles.

At present our practice is confused. There are some priests and bishops who employ *Uction* for bodily healing in the faith-healing sense, and use prayers which describe their action as a sacrament. The most distinguished example of this practice is afforded by Bishop Pakenham-Walsh, who uses *Uction* for bodily healing with astonishing success.

In primitive times, it is true, the term "sacrament" was very loosely used, and included any "mystery" a means of grace, but we no longer live in primitive times, and to-day the word has that more precise definition which we have all learned in our Catechism. It means "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual

Holy Unction

grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." Bearing this definition in mind, it is clear that we cannot ascribe the dignity of a sacrament to a bodily healing wrought by the application of relics, blessed oil, or any other similar means, because, as we have said, in these healings one department only of our complex nature, and that the most humble, is dealt with, without any necessary relation to the higher aspects of the self. A successful result of this kind can certainly be stated in terms of psychology, and needs as a healing no further explanation than any other kind of psycho-therapy; but the full and characteristic effect of a sacrament can never be merely a psychological phenomenon; it must have a direct and necessary relation to Christian character and to eternal life.

To our materialistic minds a miraculous healing is a more startling and convincing thing than a good communion; but we are pledged as Christians to the belief that by comparison with the eternal values of the gifts of grace any bodily benefit is a comparatively minor matter.

Moreover, a sacrament is a pledge, and whether the sacrament be baptism, confirmation, or Unction (if we reckon the last as such),

Healing

it can never fail of its full effect provided that the requisite dispositions be present in the receiver. The efficacy of the sacrament is in no way dependent upon the worthiness or skill of the minister, and Holy Communion is just as valid and life-giving, whether we receive it at the hands of a priest of supernatural sanctity or at the hands of a very imperfectly informed or even a wicked minister. If Unction be reckoned as a sacrament, it must be understood as a means of grace which any priest, by virtue of his office, is competent to give. We have no guarantee that every priest has "gifts of healing." The power of psychic healing seems to depend either on training or on individual gifts of nature or of grace, but a sacrament does not. It is true that a priest can learn to be a good confessor, and that a course of psychology and of moral theology will help him very much; but this does not affect the validity or non-validity of the absolution which he pronounces as the representative of the corporate body, dispensing a power committed to His Church by Christ. His learning only concerns the discretion which he uses in giving or withholding absolution and the value of his ghostly counsel and advice.

The Church of Rome, following the experience of the ages, defines the grace of the sacrament of the last Unction as being primarily,

Holy Unction

like that of all the sacraments, a spiritual grace to fortify the soul. It is "a special grace of divine assistance, whereby the sick person is spiritually relieved and comforted, namely, to resist and overcome the assaults and temptations of the devil, to bear with patience and penitence the disability and pain of his disease, in such wise that the alleviation of his mind may react upon the body, and may conduce to the restoration of his health if this shall be expedient for his salvation."*

The modern advocate of faith-healing asks, "Who does not know the buoyant effect of good health on our spiritual state?" The sacramentalist, perhaps more wisely, points to the reaction of spiritual states upon the body.

It is clear that in this description of the sacrament a good deal of emphasis is laid upon those words of St. James, "and if he shall have committed sins they shall be forgiven him."

Even when actual sins have been confessed and absolved, there remains a general lassitude and devitalisation of the soul for which this sacrament provides a medicine.

Bodily healing, though a conditional and secondary effect, is yet a real object of the sacrament. The sick man is taught to look for it if it be God's will, and if it shall be expedient

* Lehmkuhl, *Theologia Moralis*, vol. ii., 713.

Healing

for his salvation. The first effect of the sacrament he can in no wise fail to receive; provided he comes with the right disposition he is never sent empty away. The physical healing he is encouraged to desire, but he knows that it is not granted in every case.

In the view which is gaining credence in England, Unction may be administered in any case of sickness for which we should be justified in seeking medical assistance.

The traditional teaching of the Church as to the subject of the sacrament is as follows. First it is for the baptised only, as St. James indicates when he says, "Is any *among you* sick?" Pope Innocent I (A.D. 402-417) wrote: "This Unction may not be given to penitents (persons under canonical censure), seeing that it is of the nature of a sacrament. For how is it to be imagined that one kind (of sacrament) may be given to those to whom the other sacraments are denied?"* Its subject is a Christian of years of discretion, who is sick and in at least remote danger of death. Not an infant who has done no sin, for the forgiveness of sins is an essential effect of this sacrament; not a man in health who is in danger of death, such as a soldier going into action, a man condemned to execution, or a woman expecting childbirth, since it

* "Holy Unction," by Archdale A. King, p. 9.

Holy Unction

is a sacrament for the sick and those suffering from present bodily infirmity. It is not for trivial or chronic ailments. Some discretion as to the degree of sickness appropriate for Unction there must obviously be if we are to preserve the dignity of the sacrament, though faith-healing would be quite permissible for comparatively small ailments, even for a severe toothache. The rough general distinction implied by "remote danger of death" draws a line between grave illness, such as phthisis even in its earlier stages, and troublesome complaints like chronic dyspepsia, ordinary cases of rheumatism and neuralgic pains. On the other hand, it is a perversion of the use of the sacrament to postpone it until the patient is *in extremis* and incapable of making any response to the reception of grace.

Those who to-day are protesting against what seems to them an excessive and faithless caution in thus restricting the employment of sacramental Unction are accustomed to appeal from the present rules of the Church of Rome to the greater freedom which marked the practice of the primitive Church. Father Puller, whose authority on the subject is second to none, supports this view. "During the first seven centuries of our era," he tells us, "the custom of praying over sick people and anointing them

Healing

with holy oil continued without a break.” Again he says: “ I can find no trace in the first seven centuries of sick people being anointed for the remission of their sins, or for the removal of the *reliquiæ* of sin, or to impart to them grace enabling them to die happily or courageously.” The change to the restricted use which is now traditional began about the year 800.

For reasons to be mentioned in the next chapter, the question of bodily healing, whether spiritual or medicinal, seems to be that upon which the primitive Church is least fitted to be our guide. Natural science was scarcely known to the Christians of that period, and to go to them for direction in the disputable territory where science and the supernatural meet is to run the risk of obscurantism. We cannot think ourselves back into the world in which they moved, for those ages of history are closed and separated from us by a gulf of time, and to sweep away God’s teaching of centuries is not an act of faith, but a gesture of reaction.

Ecclesiastical law, like any other system of law, represents the crystallized results of experience, and the present teaching concerning the effect of the sacrament, combined with the restrictions of its use, appear to have been produced by the steady pressure of various kinds of disadvantage or impropriety which a

Holy Unction

bolder and more indiscriminate policy involves. It is remarkable that in the dark ages the sacrament of healing as a normal function of the official ministry of the Church separated itself from that looser, less responsible kind of psychic healing which we class with the miraculous, round which gathered so much that is least permanently valuable, and indeed least creditable, in the history of Christendom. In the first seven centuries the two ideas merged into one another, but if faith-healing and the sacrament of Unction had continued as one and the same thing, the corruption of a responsible and official means of grace might have reached very serious proportions. As it is, whatever may be said against the popular cult of relics, the sacrament of Unction is free from the charge of superstitious use.

Faith-healing and the sacrament of Unction,⁷ then, are two separate things. The first addresses itself through the subconsciousness to the body, and may as a consequence, but not a necessary or invariable consequence, result in a spiritual benefit also. The second, like all sacraments, addresses itself to the spirit, and may as a consequence, but not an invariable consequence, result in a bodily benefit also.

We should pray earnestly that this sacrament may be officially restored to us as part of that

Healing

great revival of life which God is sending to His Church in England. As things stand at present our spiritual life suffers from its absence as a regularly recognised and normal means of grace.

The sacrament of "the last Unction" provides a means for calming and fortifying the soul in face of the approach of death, which comes to all men, though not all experience the need of healing.

Among the poor, even if during their lifetime they have made little use of the benefits of religion, the instinct lingers that a priest should minister to them when they are near the point of death; but the educated classes, even those of them who have lived religiously, too often die with no external consolation from their Church.

It is not unusual even for the devout to meet their last hour in surroundings from which all visitors to the sick-room are excluded except the doctor and the nurse. At the hour of their greatest need the supernatural aid on which they have depended when in health is cut off, because they have never been taught to look for any special means of grace at such a time, and there seems little that is definite for the priest to do.

It would be an enormous blessing if we could

Holy Unction

see the Church of England make up her mind as to what the sacrament of Unction is, teach her people clearly what to look for in it, and administer it to persons who have learned the value of its aid in making a good death.

Its administration may of course be repeated, and if God grants them recovery after its reception they may hope to be anointed again if circumstances allow and danger of death returns. But if we take into account our instinctive desire for every aid for a good and holy death, it is as the *last* anointing that we shall chiefly look upon it; and in spite of the materialistic drag of modern thought we shall insist that spiritual benefits are the boon which mortal man stands most in need of when the time comes for him to die.

CHAPTER IV

PSYCHIC HEALING AND MEDICINE

OUR Lord's commission to the Apostles, that they should heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease, a command repeated to the seventy disciples, together with His promise of healing by laying hands upon the sick, recorded among other signs confirmatory of the gospel in the last verses of St. Mark, certainly constitutes a call to His Church to exercise a ministry of healing.

In fact, all the records of our Lord's life exhibit Him in so marked and emphatic a manner as a healer that it is obvious that healing must come under His approbation; and we may confidently claim that whosoever ministers to the sick from motives of mercy, every physician and every surgeon who is loyal to his profession, does it, even though he knows it not, to Jesus.

This healing ministry which Christ bequeathed to Christendom, this work of mercy which He took upon Himself, exercised and passed on to us, has found an outlet in two ways—the way of psychic healing, and the way of

Psychic Healing and Medicine

the physician. In our Lord's own day the art of the physician was in its undeveloped and grotesque infancy, and the way of psychic healing with its far simpler technique was by consequence more prominent; it was the mode in which the mercy of God could at that time more easily and evidently be set free. It was almost the only possible channel through which this stream of compassion which flows from Christ could find an outlet in the conditions then prevailing in the world. St. Paul's advice to Timothy, "Use no longer water, but take a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities," argues a very naïve and primitive theory of medicinal remedies, though the Apostle counsels the use of such remedies so far as they are known. In later ages, and above all in the last hundred years, the art of medicine, inspired by the motive of Christian mercy and under the steady pressure of the Christian standard of the value of human life, has developed into an immense and beneficent agency for the relief of human suffering. Our hospitals are not any the less genuine agencies of the healing ministry of Christ because they make use of material means for healing and employ the God-given power of the human reason.

As we look backwards into past history, the part played by psychic healing assumes larger

Healing

dimensions than it does to-day, and the part played by scientific medicine is proportionably smaller. In the dark ages and the middle ages miraculous cures were matter of common experience, or at least of common belief, and genuine medicine was practically unknown. We must bear in mind the history of the development of the healing art as a whole. For centuries the learning of Hippocrates and Galen was left undeveloped, even where it was not utterly forgotten, and the middle ages did nothing to carry on the scientific methods of the ancient Greeks. The motto stamped on the pewter phials of the "water of St. Thomas" sold at Canterbury ran: *Optimus egrorum medicus fit Thomas bonorum* ("For good people that are sick Thomas is the best of physicians"); and men flocked on pilgrimage to Canterbury who would nowadays go to the doctor or the hospital.

The practices of the best medical science of the fourteenth century in England were incredibly barbarous. M. Jusserand, in his well-known book "English Wayfaring Life," quotes from a treatise written by John of Gaddesden, court doctor to Edward II., the following prescription for smallpox: "Let scarlet red be taken, and let him who is suffering smallpox be entirely wrapped in it or in some other red cloth; I did this when the son of the illustrious

Psychic Healing and Medicine

King of England suffered from smallpox; I took care that all about his bed should be red, and that cure succeeded very well.” Of the same doctor M. Jusserand tells us that he had for a long time been troubled how to cure stone. “At last,” says he in his “*Praxis medica rosa anglica dicta*,” “I thought of collecting a good quantity of those beetles which in summer are found in the dung of oxen, also of the crickets which sing in the fields. I cut off the heads and wings of the crickets and put them with the beetles and common oil into a pot; I covered it and left it afterwards for a day and a night in a bread oven. I drew out the pot and heated it at a moderate fire, I pounded the whole and rubbed the sick parts; in three days the pain had disappeared.”

A remedy for diseases of the spleen which he recommends in the same treatise is “seven heads of fat bats.”*

If such were the courses of treatment ordered by the most eminent physician in England, it is no wonder that “good people that were sick” preferred to go on pilgrimage to our Lady of Walsingham or to St. Thomas of Canterbury. The method of ecclesiastical healing was at least less nasty.

It is well when we try to estimate the place

* “English Wayfaring Life,” Jusserand, pp. 180, 181.

Healing

of faith-healing in the past to bear in mind what alternatives were available.* The will to be cured, which is a mark of all organisms that are virile and tenacious of life, often found its own way to health without science in the days when science was unknown. It is possible that when no other channel, or only a very narrow channel, existed, the healing mercy of God found a larger outlet by the non-medical way, and men may have been more amenable to suggestion in those rough and simple days.

The scientific ignorance of the middle ages was no aid to faith—far from it; the world in which alchemy held the place which chemistry holds now, when the astrologer held the place of the astronomer, was a world in which it was far harder to distinguish truth from falsity. The believer mingled more superstition with his faith; the critically minded had stronger temptation to doubt not only the fundamentals

* In the Old Testament, King Asa is implicitly rebuked because when his disease was exceeding great, “he sought not to the Lord but to the physicians” (2 Chron. xvi. 12). We know practically nothing of the medical practice of the ancient Jews, but it appears that the prophets exercised some kind of healing ministry (1 Kings v.; 2 Kings iv. 34; Isa. xxxviii. 22). Probably the only alternative in the way of the physician was of very small efficacy, and of low repute; it may well have involved a good deal that was heathenish and superstitious. Time brings its revenges, and to-day the temperament of King Asa would probably have taken him to Christian Science.

Psychic Healing and Medicine

of religion, but even the reasonableness of the world in which he lived.

It is on the very side in which the mediæval world was weakest that our modern world has made the most marvellous advance, and this fresh access of power from our knowledge of natural science makes the world a more intelligible as well as a more salubrious home for man. In no department of knowledge has this advance been more marked and rapid than in medical science, and in none have its results been more entirely merciful and good.

The psychic method of healing was never, if we take a broad view of Christendom, entirely dormant in the Church.

Taking its origin from Christ (though such healing existed before His day), it branched off into two different types—the sacramental and the charismatic. In the first centuries of our era the two may be said to overlap and blend one into the other, but they soon show plain points of contrast. Of the sacramental type promulgated by St. James we have already spoken. It is for the faithful, “Is any among you sick?”—it is associated with the forgiveness of sins; it is to be performed by the elders or priests as part of their usual ministry. The lineal descendant of this type is the sacrament of Holy Unction.

Healing

For this, as for any sacrament, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God is required of its recipients. The effect is said by theologians not to be *per modum miraculi*, but to possess virtue supernatural indeed, but in some manner normal, whereby natural causes of health are assisted.

It remains for us to consider the still more primitive method of healing called by St. Paul the "gift of healing," and classed by him among the charismatic gifts of the Holy Ghost which are not possessed by everyone ("Have all gifts of healing?" 1 Cor. xii. 30). This method was used by our Lord before the institution of any sacraments, and by the Apostles both before and after Pentecost. St. Paul ranks it with "miracles" and "gifts of tongues." It depends upon powers which seem to be latent in the healer, or the healing thing; it does not derive, as sacraments do, from a power inherent in the corporate body of the Church, but from a personal gift vouchsafed to saints or possessed by certain exceptional persons as a natural endowment. From the recipient's point of view "faith to be healed" seems to be required, such as St. Paul discerned in the cripple of Lystra, but this "faith to be healed" need not connote faith in Christ, for the general opinion of the Anatolian peasants of that town at the

Psychic Healing and Medicine

moment of the miracle was that St. Paul was Mercury, and that St. Barnabas was Jupiter. It is obvious that faith in Christ in the theological sense was not demanded of all who were healed by Him or in His name. The impotent man at Bethesda did not even know who Jesus was: "He that was healed wist not who it was; for Jesus had conveyed Himself away."* The man blind from his birth, when asked after his healing, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" answered, "And who is he Lord, that I might believe on Him?"†

Lack of faith in Himself does not seem to have been an insuperable barrier to our Lord's healing ministry, for St. Mark tells us that even at Nazareth, when "He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief," healing was an exception to this disability, for "He laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them." Our Lord worked a healing miracle for a Samaritan leper, and another, after a mysterious protest, for a Syro-Phœnician woman. He indeed expressly limited His earthly ministry to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," but the Apostles who were sent to the Gentiles healed heathen people freely; the miracles worked by St. Paul on the island of Malta, for

* St. John v. 13.

† St. John ix. 35, 36.

Healing

instance, do not appear to have presupposed any knowledge of Christ.

These exercises of the charismatic gift are not of the same nature as sacraments, they are not means of grace, nor privileges of the faithful, but gifts of mercy predisposing men to receive the gospel, though the fact of being healed did not in all cases bring men to glorify God, as is seen in the case of the nine lepers recorded by St. Luke.

It is the same with faith-healing to-day. The work of Mr. Hickson in the mission field is not confined to Christians; Jews, members of other religions, and persons who profess no religion have been ministered to by him with remarkable results. In some cases, while the physical effect aimed at is produced, no spiritual reaction appears to follow. A witness of his work in Japan writes from a certain place, "Many of the non-Christians seem to have regarded, not God, but Mr. Hickson as the healer, and one or two of those cured will have nothing to do with Christianity."* So it must often have been, one fancies, with the Apostles: it is a Christian duty and privilege to do works of mercy for all men—the heathen as well as the household of faith.

It is unnecessary to say that no theory of auto-suggestion can cover our Lord's miracles, even

* *The Healer*, March, 1922, p. 68.

Psychic Healing and Medicine

as expressing a method by which He may have worked; "virtue went out of Him"; and it is beyond the province of psychology to attempt any definition of His powers. But in the case of ecclesiastical miracles, which seem to be lineal descendants, so far as they are genuine, of the charismatic and exceptional ministry alluded to by St. Paul, and in the gift of the modern faith-healer, of whom Mr. Hickson is a typical and distinguished example, the psychic healing follows laws which science is now beginning to investigate.

Psychic healing as such is no monopoly of true religion. Naaman the Syrian shows that he was more or less familiar with the practice; he expected the Hebrew prophet to call upon the name of Jehovah his God and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper (2 Kings v. 11).

When our Blessed Lord healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, the cripple was hoping for a miraculous healing from the waters of the pool, which points to a local cult of healing in Jerusalem. Touching for the King's Evil in England can hardly have been accounted as an act of pure religious faith, and in our own day Christian Science and scientific psycho-therapy make the point still plainer.

It is capable of perversion to the service of

Healing

false religion, and the malevolent phenomena of witchcraft are only to be explained by the same hypothesis of the power of suggestion upon the unconscious.

With the purest intentions religious persons may do harm by raising hopes which they have not the power to satisfy. Every Bethesda is littered with lame and impotent folk, of whom but a small number are healed in the periodic troubling of the water. Well over half a million pilgrims travel every year to Lourdes, but the number of cures claimed is relatively small—something like the proportion of men who make their fortunes in a rush to a new Australian gold-field.*

Perhaps the greatest danger is to encourage people to look to religion for material benefits instead of spiritual. Mediæval religion, with its strong sense of the joys of heaven and of the terrors of purgatory and of hell, preserved men from resting content with mundane benefits, even the blessing of relief from pain. We are less “other-worldly,” and our popular religion tends to be rather earthbound, to look for a painless and economically perfect paradise on earth. In our efforts to spiritualise the material we must not materialise the spiritual.

* In the first fifty years of the pilgrimage under 4,000 cures were registered at the *Bureau des Constatations*.

Psychic Healing and Medicine

All these dangers are worth mentioning. Yet there remains a vast amount of value to be gained by the devout mind. As an evidence of the love of God it is more convincing than many books, and this was the chief point in our Saviour's use of it. "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

The fact of psychic healing in itself breaks down a good deal of our innate materialistic scepticism, and most of us are capable of believing and disbelieving at the same time. "Lord, I believe," we cry; "help Thou mine unbelief." Psychic healing confronts us with the mysterious powers of our invisible nature. Religion is always at home with the ideas which it suggests, materialistic science is not. By dealing a shattering blow at our trust in the tangible, it opens our eyes to the possibilities of the invisible. When psychic healing is consciously allied to those powers of spirit which lie outside the region of psychology, its religious value is more potent still. Prayer is a mental process, and like all mental actions it can be done well or badly. So far it is a psychological process, and the study of the psychology of the subconscious (of quiescence, attention, auxiliary emotion, etc.) is incidentally helping many to practise contemplation and the higher states of prayer. But psychology cannot say

Healing

anything about the metaphysical truths involved in prayer, the existence or the nature of God, or the possibility of communion with Him. The method of psychic healing is a method which religion can use, and it is a very powerful instrument.

One great task of our generation is to rescue science from the philosophy of materialism, and as a practical instance of this to Christianise medicine both from the patient's and the doctor's point of view. A right development of Christian faith-healing may do much towards this end, an unbalanced advocacy of it would do even more to defeat it.

The way of the physician has earned the right to be the final court of appeal and the ultimate guide and directing agency of all the art of healing. "They are God's ministers attending on this very thing," and even if the minister of the laws of science is as unconscious of his divinely appointed function as were the ministers of Roman law to whom St. Paul refers, nevertheless God's minister he is.

The contribution to the total well-being of the human race made by medical science in the last two generations is unparalleled in history. During the last hundred years, and especially in the last half-century, the advance of science has greatly increased the average

Psychic Healing and Medicine

expectation of life. This advance has mainly been in the direction of working out the natural history of disease, in the discovery of its cause, and in unmasking, as it were, the position of the enemy.

The discoveries of Pasteur and their use by Lister have enabled modern surgery to invade successfully almost every region of the body, and operative technique has been carried to so high a pitch of skill that the means of healing most frequently used by medicine is surgery. In addition to this, the science of bacteriology has not only produced many antidotes to fatal diseases, such as diphtheria, but has enormously increased the efficiency of preventive medicine and the promotion of public health. Medicine has not hitherto been much interested in the psychology of healing, and Dr. Head, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, probably represents the best opinion of his profession when he says, "The general physician is scarcely familiar with the psychical side of medicine; he and his colleague the surgeon rarely consider how large a part the mind plays even in the symptoms of gross structural disease."*

Medicine is cautious and slow to welcome novelties, but science may be trusted to develop psychic healing, and there is a great opportunity

* *The British Medical Journal*, May, 1922, p. 827.

Healing

for the Church to go hand in hand with medicine in this unfamiliar department of the healing art, supplementing and aiding the work of the physician. Nevertheless, the main line of advance of modern science is in the direction of preventive medicine—not the curing of separate cases of disease, but such work as cancer research, which seeks to check the great scourges of mankind at their point of origin. The chief function of the psychic healer is to undertake cases in which material remedies have failed. It is for the minority and for exceptional cases; it can never be the senior partner in the healing world.

It is the duty of the Church, and of every minister of the Church, to have a more enlightened appreciation of the ultimate responsibility of the physician than is possessed by the average man. He ought to be in advance of public opinion in this matter, not behind it, and we are often reminded by anti-vivisectionists and others of the immense amount of dangerously uneducated opinion that there is on this matter in the modern world.

In an ideal world the doctor and the spiritual healer would both work together, or, better still, their functions would be combined in the same man. As things are, we may at least ensure that there shall be, so far as the Church

Psychic Healing and Medicine

is concerned, no conflict between the two methods of releasing the healing power of Christ.

There is much to be done in Christianising both the practice and the use of medicine, and side by side with this we hope that there may go a study of the practice of spiritual healing under wise direction and control. M. Coué has pointed the way to a healing ministry which is certain to be developed on scientific lines. In this ministry the Church should take her part, mindful of the lessons of the past and learning all she can from the experience of modern science.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

ECCLESIASTICAL MIRACLES

“THE subject of mediæval miracles,” says Mr. Plummer, in his commentary on Bede’s “Ecclesiastical History,” “is one of considerable difficulty. The large majority of them may be set aside at once, as being quite lacking in anything like contemporary evidence. Many may be condemned summarily on internal evidence, being silly, unspiritual, or even positively immoral. Others are open to suspicion as being so evidently modelled on the miracles of the Bible, and still more on those of the apocryphal Scriptures. Others need not necessarily be miracles at all, but may be either mere coincidences brought about by perfectly natural means, though a devout mind will gladly believe that they have been divinely ordered, or due to causes which are only now beginning to be investigated, but which there is no reason to regard as supernatural. But after all these deductions have been made, the question remains whether there is not a residuum which cannot be explained away.”*

* Plummer’s edition of Bede. Introduction, p. 64.

Ecclesiastical Miracles

These criticisms include all the miraculous stories of which records of healings form only a part, though the larger part.

Bede's "*Ecclesiastical History*" abounds in miracles of healing; so numerous are they that they become monotonous. Here is one of which Bede says it "was lately made known to me by the very brother on whom it took place," and he says that the healing was effected three years before the time at which he writes. "There was (at Dacre, near Ulleswater) a certain youth whose eyelid had been disfigured by an unsightly tumour; which when it increased daily, and threatened the loss of his eye, the physicians tried to reduce by applying emollients, but without success. Some said that it ought to be cut off, others forbade this to be done for fear of a greater misfortune." A priest of the monastery in which the young man lived had occasion to take from the reliquary a relic consisting of some hair of St. Cuthbert, in order to give a portion to a friend. He asked the young man to put the relic back for him, but the young man, "admonished by some salutary impulse," applied it to his diseased eyelid, and held it there for some time before putting it back in its place. This happened, "as he was wont to relate," at about the second hour of the day (7 a.m.). "And while he was

Healing

thinking about or doing other things which were requisite to be done that day, at the approach of the sixth hour of the same day (noon), on suddenly touching his eye, he found it and the eyelid as sound as if no deformity or tumour had ever appeared on it" ("Ecclesiastical History," Book iv. ch. xxxii.). This example, taken at random, is a case of healing by means of relics, but there are instances far too numerous to quote of healings performed by living saints, by prayer, by touch, by the use of holy water, and by other means. In the above example the evidence is first hand, given to Bede by the man who had been healed, and fresh in the historian's memory. We see also that the healing had lasted for at least three years. The date of this event would be in the first decades of the eighth century.

The evidence for the (posthumous) miracles of St. Thomas is quite contemporary. The Archbishop was martyred on December 29, 1170, and Benedict, a monk of Canterbury, completed his "Book of Miracles" in 1175. His chronicle and that of three other contemporary writers is translated with a commentary in "St. Thomas of Canterbury," by Edwin Abbot.

Miracles of healing began three days after the Archbishop's death with the recovery from

Ecclesiastical Miracles

an attack of blindness of the wife of a knight in Sussex, who wept for him as a martyr; on the Sunday following, a lady in Gloucestershire whose mother, living in London, had professed faith in St. Thomas as a martyr, and had pledged her daughter to a pilgrimage to the place of his death, received healing from some kind of paralysis. From that point onwards miracles of healing multiply to an extraordinary extent. Dr. Abbott, who is a highly critical historian, maintains that coincidence will not explain all the facts. "In a large number of cases probably, and in some certainly, men and women were instantaneously or rapidly healed, in a way in which an ordinary physician could not have healed them; and the most reasonable statement of the cause is that it was a strong emotional shock conveyed to them through faith in the late Archbishop, whom people now called saint and martyr." Among the poor people zeal for the martyr was associated with his championship of the oppressed, and specially with hatred of the harsh and barbarous administration of the King's law. The story of the healing of Eilward of Westoning after his judicial blinding and mutilation for theft of articles valued at just over one *nummus* is an amazingly detailed picture of twelfth-century life, and of the extreme brutality of Norman law.

Healing

Water to which had been added a minute portion of the martyr's blood, known as "The water of St. Thomas," was sold in phials to pilgrims, and innumerable cures were attributed to it. An instance is quoted by one of the contemporary historians, as being to him barely credible but true, of a young man at the point of death begging in agony for the Martyr's Water, who was supplied by his friends with fresh water from the spring, saying, "Here is the Water of the Saint which you desire." The sick man believed and drank, and "was immediately cured under the health-giving deception." This miracle was carefully authenticated at Canterbury, and from its nature is very good evidence of fact (Abbott, vol. i., p. 317).

There are few saints to whom more miracles of healing are attributed than St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552); in fact, much disservice has been done to the memory of this marvellous missionary by the imaginative and fantastic stories of miracles which have been ascribed to him. He is said on several occasions to have raised the dead to life, and apart from healings, many miracles, some of which are silly and some unspiritual, are ascribed to him. It seems impossible, however, that his reputation as a healer can have been entirely without foundation in fact; as his biographer, Father Coleridge, main-

Ecclesiastical Miracles

tains, we can hardly believe “ that such multitudes of persons of various nations flocked to his preaching and believed him to be a teacher sent from God, who had power to heal the maladies of the body as well as to enlighten the soul, without having had some tangible ground for supposing that this belief was true.”

The fact that St. Francis makes so few allusions to his miracles in his voluminous correspondence is attributed by Father Coleridge to his modesty, and so it may well be. In any case such references as he does make are worthy of more attention than stories based on second- or third-hand evidence. “ I had been living,” he says in a letter written to St. Ignatius Loyola and the Society at Rome from Cochin in the early part of his ministry in 1543, “ for nearly four months in a Christian village, occupied in translating the Catechism. A great number of natives came from all parts to entreat me to take the trouble to go to their houses and call on God by the bedside of their sick relatives. Such numbers of sick also made their own way to us that I had enough to do to read a Gospel over each of them. . . . The thing grew to such a pitch that it was impossible for me myself to satisfy all, and at the same time to avoid their quarrelling among themselves, everyone striving to be the first to get me to his own house; so I

Healing

hit on a way of serving all at once. As I could not go myself I sent round children whom I could trust in my place. They went to the sick persons, assembled their families and neighbours, recited the Creed with them, and encouraged the sufferers to conceive a certain and well-founded confidence of their restoration. Then, after all this, they recited the prayers of the Church. To make my tale short, God was moved by the faith and piety of these children and of the others, and restored to a great number of sick persons health both of body and soul. How good He was to them ! He made the very disease of their bodies the occasion of calling them to salvation, and drew them to the Christian faith almost by force !”

This belief in the prayers of children is very characteristic of St. Francis Xavier, and it is clear that he regarded spiritual healing in the light of a means of predisposing men to receive the Gospel.

Another case referred to in his letters is the recovery after baptism by him of a woman in danger of death. He definitely claimed this recovery as miraculous.

The healings wrought by the prayers of the Curé d'Ars were very numerous, and more medical evidence of the nature of the disorders healed is available.

Ecclesiastical Miracles

Among the "Pièces Justificatives" quoted in "Le Curé d'Ars" by L'Abbé Alfred Monnin is the following:

"I, the undersigned, doctor of medicine, residing at Vaus (Ardèche), testify that I have attended Mademoiselle Martin, novice of the convent of St. Joseph, suffering from aphonia, whose case has refused to respond to several methods of treatment. I began to despair of her recovery and thought that the symptoms pointed to an incurable affection of the chest. I have seen Mademoiselle Martin completely cured after a journey. I cannot explain this healing by any natural means.

"B. OLLIER.

"VAUS,
"January 9, 1857."

Another medical certificate speaks of rheumatism of the joints which made movement impossible, another of threatened spinal curvature in a boy of seven years old, both cured at Ars. Advanced cases of phthisis and of other serious maladies are also said to have been cured by him (Monnin's "Life," vol. ii., chap. iv.). It is worth noting that though M. Vianney's miracles of healing were very numerous, his chief claim to greatness is by no means based upon them. They are quite incidental in his life. He looked upon his proper

Healing

work as a priest—the raising of dead souls to newness of life—as far more important. “By reason of his gift of miracles (which he attributed to the prayer of St. Philomène), he was cruelly tried in his patience, terrified in his humility, tyrannised over by the crowd.” After one such event he said: “I do wish St. Philomène had cured this little person at his own home.”

It is also worth noticing that M. Vianney was the kind of person who would have much interested the Psychical Research Society. He was much “haunted,” or, in the terms of his biographer, “persecuted by demons,” especially by phenomena of the kind associated with a *poltergeist*. Yet no one could have been more sane, shrewd and humorous than he; there is no trace of the neurotic in his character.

These instances are only typical of a large class. Alban Butler’s “Lives of the Saints” contains notices of seventeen or eighteen hundred saints of all periods, and the power of healing is almost universally ascribed to them or to their relics. In fact, evidence of miracles worked by the saint after his death is demanded as part of the process of canonisation, and these miracles are nearly always miracles of healing.

Lourdes

LOURDES.

The largest class of contemporary healing phenomena which falls within the category of Catholicism is that connected with the pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The origin of the pilgrimage were the visions of our Lady seen by a peasant girl named Bernadette Soubirous in 1859. The shrine erected in the grotto where the visions were seen, and the healing spring close by, began at once to be the centre of a pilgrimage; the cures are ascribed to the power of our Lady and are associated in most cases, but not in all, with the water of the healing spring.

It is estimated that more than half a million pilgrims visit Lourdes in a normal year; the company of *Chemins de fer du Midi* state that Lourdes station receives more than a million passengers per annum, but not all of these are to be accounted pilgrims. It is reckoned that during the first half-century of the pilgrimage more than 3,962 cures, either partial or complete, were registered at the "Bureau des Constata-tions Médicales," of which only 278 were of nervous disorders. (These figures are from the *Catholic Encyclopædia*.) The healings at Lourdes are the most remarkable of any, both from the nature of the healings recorded, the

Healing

rapid or even instantaneous character of the healing, and the careful medical testimony.

The sick poor who are sent to Lourdes with the great pilgrimages at the expense of the faithful are not admitted without a medical certificate detailing the actual state of their health and the incurability of the disease by medical treatment. In their case functional disease and any form of hysteria is not admitted. As soon as a cure, real or apparent, is reported, the case is further considered by the "Bureau des Constatations," and a full medical "dossier" is drawn up.

Perhaps the most sensational miracle is that of Pierre de Rudder, a farm labourer of West Flanders.

He fractured his leg at the age of forty-four. The tibia and fibula suffered direct fracture, and after a time the leg ulcerated, and an open wound reaching to the bone was formed. For eight years he suffered from an ununited compound fracture. The cure was effected at a shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes at Oostacker-lez-Gand in Belgium. He was going round the grotto at this shrine with other pilgrims, and while on the third round he was seized with deep emotion; all at once he dropped his crutches, walked by himself, and went to kneel before our Lady's statue. The wounds

Lourdes

had cicatrised and the fractured bones had suddenly united. After his death the bones were medically examined, and it was found that the broken bones, after uniting by callus, had assumed the same contour as those of the healthy leg.

Marie Lebrauchu was cured on August 20, 1892, of pulmonary tuberculosis that had set in some years before. She was healed suddenly in the piscina at Lourdes. (She is La Grivotte in Zola's novel "*Lourdes*," but her case differs from that of her fictitious counterpart in that she is still alive. She is at present matron of the Good Shepherd Institute at Angers.)

Gabriel Gargam was cured on August 19, 1901, of spasmodic paraplegia caused by grave lesions of the spinal cord which were contracted in a railway accident. During the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament he was able to rise to a sitting posture, and found himself cured. At the present time he devotes himself in summer-time to assisting invalids at the piscina.

Most of these cases, including ulcer of the leg, cancer of the breast, and fracture of the leg, were suddenly cured. Sometimes patients were cured on a second visit after complete failure at the first; sometimes the cure was attended by extreme momentary pain. These cases are taken from "*Twenty Cures at Lourdes*," medi-

Healing

cally discussed by Dr. F. de Grandmaison de Bruno, English translation with a Preface by Sir Bertram Windle, M.D., F.R.S.

Further particulars may be found in "Lourdes, Yesterday, To-day and To-morrow," by D. Barbe, translated by Alice Meynell, 1894. Lourdes is to modern France what Canterbury was to mediæval England, and is one of very numerous holy places which have been centres of pilgrimage, generally, but not always, associated with miracles of healing. Holywell, in Wales, a spring sacred to the memory of St. Winifred, was such a centre of pilgrimage for healing in the middle ages.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CURES.

The evidence for cures worked by the practitioners of Christian Science is marked by two features: it is extremely voluminous, and it is hardly supported by any medical testimony, either as regards the diagnosis of the disorder that was cured or the nature and permanence of the cure. Most of the testimony is American, and the character of the disease is frequently defined in language more eloquent than scientific, such as "stomach and gall-bladder trouble," "a swelling on the cheek bone which caused much comment and fear," or a person cured of "the need of glasses." The precon-

Christian Science Cures

ceived attitude of hostility to ordinary medical methods precludes more scientific definitions, and makes the average Christian Science "testimony" as vague as to the terminology of disease as any cases quoted by the Venerable Bede.

On the other hand, the evidence impresses the reader by the very fact of its quantity. There are some forty bound volumes of the *Christian Science Journal* packed with records of healing, ranging from cases of defective eyesight to fractured thigh bone at the age of seventy. Cases of pleurisy, "lung trouble," spinal meningitis, and deafness are typical. While the cases, taken singly, may hardly be convincing to the sceptically minded, it seems impossible that so vast and growing a movement can possibly be based entirely upon illusion. There can be no doubt at all that Christian Science owes its vogue to the fact that it can show a number of real results.

One or two characteristic testimonies may be quoted. A Mrs. Frances Gault, of Springfield, Illinois, testifies in the *Christian Science Journal*, April, 1918 (vol. xxxvi.), as follows: "About fifteen years ago I became interested in Christian Science, and was healed of the need of glasses, after reading the chapter on Prayer in our textbook, 'Science and Health with Key

Healing

to the Scriptures,' by Mrs. Eddy. This was a proof of the healing power of truth. Later, hernia from which I had suffered for fifteen years disappeared as the result of treatment by a practitioner. The healing took place eleven years ago, and there has been no return of the trouble."

The wife of a chemist in Chicago bears witness in the same periodical. "About eight years ago I turned to Christian Science, when all material possessions were of no consolation, and nothing but sickness or sorrow confronted me. I had often heard of this teaching, but was not interested in it as my husband was in the drug business. When no help was received from material remedies, however, the thought came to me to investigate the claims of my Christian Science friends, and as a result I was healed of stomach and gall-bladder trouble, from which I had suffered eight years, one of Chicago's most noted physicians having recommended an operation, to which I would not consent. With the co-operation of a loving practitioner I have been entirely relieved of this pain. The application of this demonstrable truth has also healed me of what is called 'milk-leg.' The wound on my ankle was as large as half a dollar. We have had many other splendid healings in our family. One of my

Christian Science Cures

sons was bitten by a dog, and the hand became swollen and infected, but was healed in a very short time " (Mrs. Ella Woltze).

A correspondent from Wellington, Somerset, England, writes (in the *Christian Science Journal* for April, 1918) that through the faithful work and searching questions of a Christian Science practitioner she " was enabled to know the truth that makes free," and received healing from heart complaint, and was " led to believe God's promises and to take Him at His word." Her case " had been pronounced incurable by the doctors, and there seemed to be no prospect ahead but that of being a bedridden invalid," when two years before she came under Christian Science influence. She relates that the practitioner who healed her had scarcely been gone half an hour when she tested and proved the truth of God's promises by walking downstairs, that she walked miles during the subsequent few weeks, and many miles since then, whereas before she could hardly crawl about and had been a sufferer since childhood (Mrs. Phebe Harris, Wellington, Somerset).

In the May number of the same magazine, Albert Bjoraas of Bridgeport, Nebraska, claims that his right arm, which was broken in July, 1915, was healed by self-treatment on Christian Science principles in a week and a half. (As

Healing

he was already a Christian Scientist he saw no doctor.) For the healing of two ribs broken at the same time, he had to call in a Christian Science practitioner, and discovered that he had been somewhat resentful towards the person he considered responsible for the injury. He corrected this resentment by "reflective love," and his side was healed and has been well ever since. The same man writes that "on December 2, 1916, while operating an electric floor-surfacing machine, one of my fingers was caught between the drive chain and one of the sprocket wheels. This caused the machine to stop. The finger was wedged in so tight that I had to have a man to help me pull it out. The front half of the finger was crushed, but I worked faithfully in Science, and although to mortal sense there was considerable pain at first, in about two hours it was overcome. About three weeks later I was examined by a physician for life insurance. Seeing the injured finger, he stated that I would not have the full use of it, for the joint would be stiff; but I relied entirely on Christian Science treatment, and did not lose more than a few hours' work. Within a few weeks the finger was restored to its normal condition in size, and was fully as limber as were the other fingers."

He also claims to have been aided by Chris-

Christian Science Cures

tian Science in learning English. "I soon learned from 'Science and Health' that man is God's perfect child, that God is mind, and that mind is all-knowing and all-intelligent: that as man reflects the mind nothing could keep me from understanding the language in which 'Science and Health' was written. The meaning of the words kept coming to me, and within a few months I could read the Lesson-Sermons intelligently."

A Miss Jessie J. Gray, from Glasgow, writes in the *Christian Science Journal* of May, 1922, vol. xl., No. 2: "It had long seemed to me that there was something lacking in the teaching of the Church to which I belonged, for we had Jesus' definite words, 'These signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover' (St. Mark xvi. 16-18), yet this was not being done.

"So when I heard of Christian Science it seemed natural that a correct understanding of God should result in the cure of disease. . . . It was not till I was suffering very much from chronic neuritis that I was sufficiently humble to ask for help.

"A talk with a dear Christian Science practitioner comforted me, and her parting words, lovingly and confidently spoken, 'Nothing can hurt God's child,' gave me hope. She had

Healing

promised to give me treatment, and just a week later I awoke one morning with a wonderful realisation of God as the only Life. . . . I felt that I was healed, although the pain left me only gradually." In connection with a story of help which she received in managing a herd of refractory bullocks which she was driving as a war worker, she points out that the divine help came when she banished from her mind the annoyance which she had felt owing to the clumsiness of some men who might have helped but did not do so.

This purging of the mind of blame of others, of rancour and resentment, which is evident also in the case of Albert Bjoraas, seems to be the best feature in a curious form of thought which in other aspects is ignoble.

"Are all workers of miracles?" asks St. Paul before his great lyrical outburst in praise of charity. "Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not charity . . . I am nothing."

Cures Effected at Nancy

CURES EFFECTED AT NANCY BY M. COUÉ'S SYSTEM.

These include cases of acute neurasthenia, including one who had suffered for more than twenty years. This patient came to consult Coué in July, 1915; improvement followed the very first visit, and at the end of three months the patient declared himself "well, and indeed very well," the bombardment of the city notwithstanding.

In another case a cure resulted from a single sitting; the case was followed up for two years, during which time there was no relapse (date not given). Woman aged sixty; metritis for the last twenty-four years. Complete cure in six weeks from suggested treatment. Confirmed by the surgeon who had been going to operate (1915). Woman of thirty, in the third stage of pulmonary consumption, increasing emaciation, cough, shortness of breath, expectoration; seems to have only a few months to live. Immediate improvement on the use of suggestion. After a few months the cure seems complete, and a year afterwards the patient wrote to M. Coué telling him she was expecting to become a mother. A later report showed there had been no relapse. A lad of fifteen completely cured in four months of a swelling of tubercular origin on the right

Healing

arm. It was four inches long, two inches wide, and one inch in thickness. A case of enteritis, attended by low spirits and ideas of suicide, cured completely after three months and no relapse since; the cure dated from five years ago. There were also excellent mental results, and the patient, who was a mechanic, acquired increasing self-confidence and launched out into business on his own account. An intractable eczema of the hands of three years' standing cured in a few sittings.

Jacqueline G., a child of seven, who had suffered from typhoid when fourteen months old. Since then she had been totally deaf, and she was able to produce nothing but inarticulate sounds, comprehensible only to her habitual associates. Intelligent, full of vitality, and very sensitive to suggestion. After six weeks' treatment, during which she had sittings twice a week, she was able to utter all the sounds of the alphabet. The only consonants she had any serious trouble with were ch, j, s, and z. She learned several new words every day, fixing them in her memory by writing them down. She could sing, with the words, an air which had been sung before her with piano-forte accompaniment. She religiously formulated her daily auto-suggestion. For this purpose she buried her head beneath the bedclothes,

Cures Effected at Nancy

and would allow nothing and nobody to distract her attention.

This story of Jacqueline G. is worth comparing with a similar case narrated twelve hundred years before of Bishop John of Beverley by Bede ("Ecclesiastical History," Book v., chap. ii.). A youth living in a farmhouse near Beverley had been dumb since infancy, and unable to speak a single word. The Bishop, on a certain Lord's day in Lent, ordered the poor man to come into his presence, "And when he had come in told him to put forth his tongue, and taking him by the chin made the sign of the holy cross on his tongue. He then told him to say 'Gae' (Anglo-Saxon for 'Yes'). The Bishop then added the names of letters: 'Say A'; and he said A; 'Say B'; and he said this also. And when he had said after the Bishop the names of each of the letters, the latter proceeded to put syllables also, and words for him to say . . . and then whole sentences, and he did so; nor after this did he cease during the whole of that day, and the next night. And so long as he could keep awake, as those relate who were present." "The case was a complete cure. The Bishop gave him the option of taking a situation in his own household, but he chose rather to return to his home."

Bede makes no mention of deafness, which



Healing

is the cause of this kind of dumbness. Apparently the cure was similar to that done by M. Baudouin, in all respects save its rapidity, and the case is based on the evidence of eye-witnesses, and seems to be carefully observed. Neither healer claims to have cured the deafness.

In cases where the morbid state is auto-suggestive in origin and simulates a bodily disorder, a counter-suggestion sometimes brings about immediate cure. He quotes the case of Professor Gillet, of Belfort, cured of aphonia in one sitting, though he was a very sceptical patient at first. The Professor has continued his university career and published a study of auto-suggestion in 1913.*

As a rule the chief difference between the result of ecclesiastical healings and the healings by pure auto-suggestion seems to lie in the greater rapidity of those performed under supernatural influence. In the two cases of healing a deaf mute, M. Baudouin took six weeks, John of Beverley apparently about twenty-four hours. Our Lord's "Ephphatha" miracle was instantaneous, and the deafness was cured as well. There may be some significance in the fact that the word used is very easy to imitate from lip-reading.

* Baudouin, "Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion," pp.229-241.

75748

265.8

Newbolt, M.R.

N428

265.8

N 428

75748



S0-FCG-544

